

## **VISITOR USE**

### ***ANALYSIS OF VISITOR GROUP TYPES***

Visitor Group Types are derived from the visitor use statistics maintained by the NPS Office of Public Use Statistics and the Catoctin Foundation Document for Interpretation.

#### **Local Recreational Users** (approximately 40% of total visitors)

*Characteristics:* People who live in Frederick County, Maryland, and adjacent counties.

*Park Use:* Hiking, driving park roads, utilizing the Visitor Center; camping in park campgrounds; cross-country skiing..

*Issues:* During the spring, some local residents collect/harvest morel mushrooms (for personal consumption only) in the park; while doing so, some park illegally along park roads and hike off the designated park trails. During security closures, local residents ask if park trails and facilities are open to the public.

#### **Regional/National Vacationers** (approximately 50% of total visitors)

*Characteristics:* Visitors from Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C., as well as some vacationers from other areas of the United States, mostly during the summer. Of the small percentage of annual visitors who are from minority groups, most are Koreans, African-Americans, or Hispanics.

*Park Use:* Primarily hiking, camping, picnicking, and site seeing.

*Issues:* Many visitors, especially international visitors, ask “Where is Camp David?” (Park employees do not provide information regarding Camp David.)

#### **Education Groups** (approximately 10% of total visitors)

*Characteristics:* Schools and other groups from Frederick County, Baltimore, and D.C.

*Park Use:* Some groups use only the park’s camp facilities; others use the visitor center and other facilities, primarily during autumn and spring months.

*Issues:* NPS employees work with partners to help serve these education groups. These groups require park staff time to prepare the facilities and present programs. Also, park staff often respond to service calls from overnight visitors for maintenance, security, and first aid.

#### **“Virtual” Visitors** (not “counted” in the park’s visitation data)

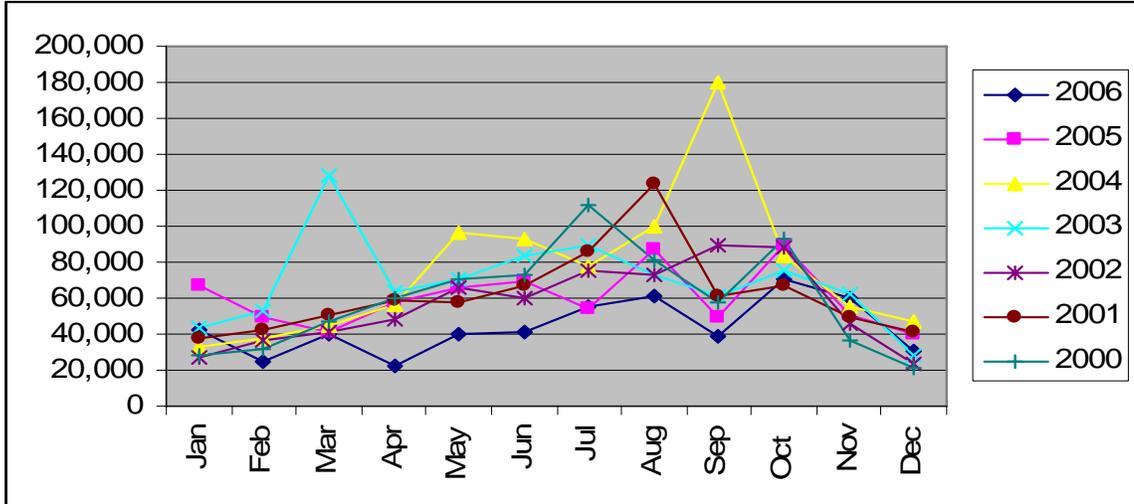
*Characteristics:* Local, national, and international visitors who “visit” the park through computers in their homes or offices via the park’s website.

*Park Use:* These “virtual” visitors have no impact on the park’s tangible resources. However, they do impact park staff in the time required to create, update, and maintain the park website.

*Issues:* As the number of virtual visitors grows each year; the importance the park’s website increases.

## VISITOR USE

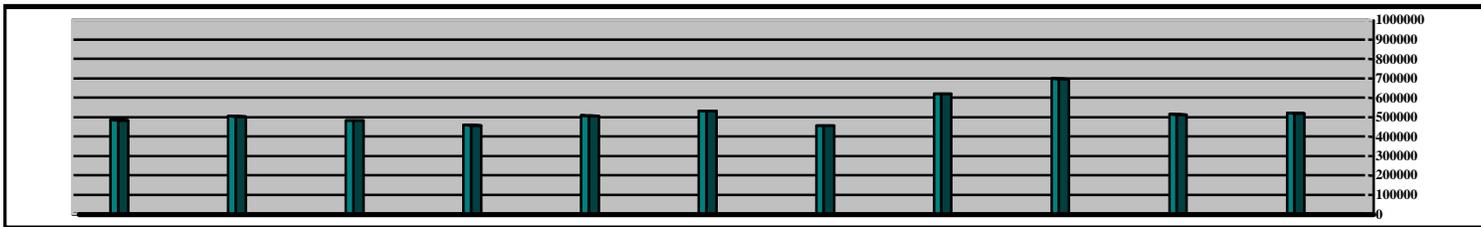
**TOTAL PARK VISITS 2000-2006**



	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>2006</b>	41,884	24,424	39,420	22,095	40,574	41,506	55,632	61,425	38,575	70,680	59,646	31,037
<b>2005</b>	67,067	49,219	40,612	57,138	65,939	69,572	54,407	86,491	49,549	89,783	50,685	39,732
<b>2004</b>	33,030	37,264	44,242	57,001	96,679	93,297	77,466	99,688	180,228	83,805	55,689	46,973
<b>2003</b>	44,032	53,410	127,992	63,948	70,933	83,647	89,932	73,341	61,602	75,617	62,080	27,655
<b>2002</b>	27,607	36,434	41,467	47,972	65,705	59,858	74,899	73,166	88,951	87,932	45,855	23,443
<b>2001</b>	37,604	42,557	50,766	59,044	57,803	67,637	86,001	123,894	61,501	67,110	49,571	41,088
<b>2000</b>	28,116	31,651	46,577	60,485	70,216	73,391	111,727	80,639	57,754	93,185	36,841	20,683

**ANNUAL RECREATION VISITS, 1996-2006**

Average annual recreation visits continue to show an overall annual increase of 1- 3%.  
 The highest recorded annual visitor use since the 1936 founding of the park occurred in 2004.



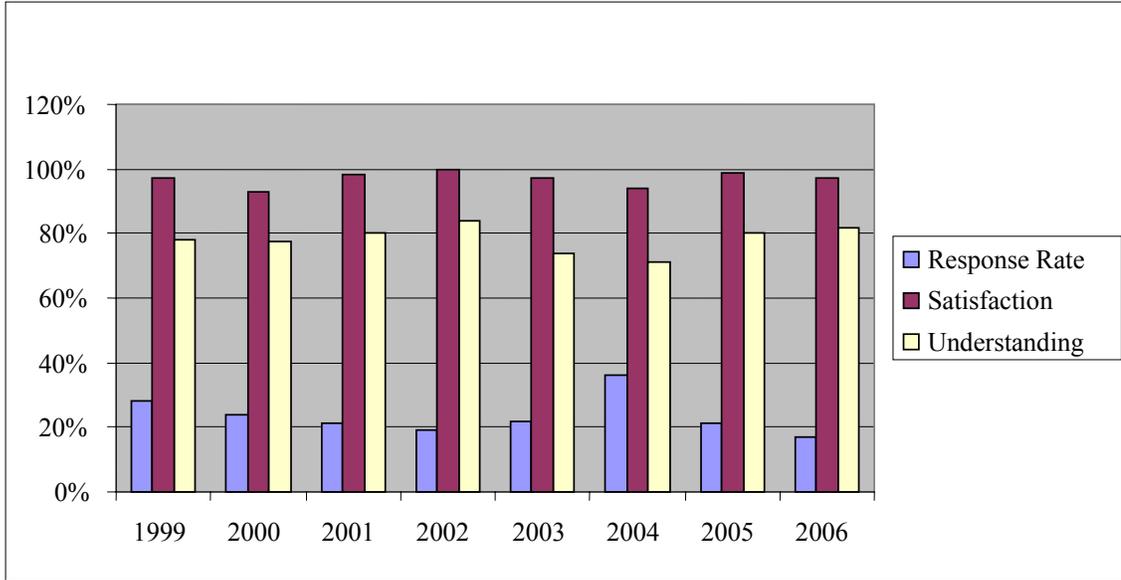
	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
<b>TOTAL</b>	484,892	503,812	483,762	459,002	508,539	532,615	457,641	621,114	699,274	515,193	522,011

# VISITOR USE

## VISITOR SURVEY

*1998-2006*

Each year the park conducts a visitor survey to determine visitor satisfaction with and understanding of park operations and facilities.



	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
<b>Response Rate</b>	23%	28%	24%	21%	19%	22%	36%	21%	17%
<b>Satisfaction</b>	95%	97%	93%	98%	100%	97%	94%	99%	97%
<b>Understanding</b>	60%	78%	77.5%	80%	84%	74%	71%	80%	82%

## VISITOR USE

### VISITOR PROFILE

#### Average Length of Stay:

0-2 Hours: 32%  
 2-4 Hours: 40%  
 1 Day: 9%  
 2 Days: 45%  
 3 Days: 23%  
 1.49 Days: Poplar Grove  
 1.83 Days: Owens Creek CG  
 1.97 Days: Misty Mount  
 2.3 Days: Fr. Co. (01)  
 2.2 Days: MD (97)

Local/Day Users: 74%  
 Through/Extended Stay Users: 29%  
 Repeat Visitors (01): 61%

#### Overnight Stays in Unit

<u>CATO</u>	<u>NCRO</u>	<u>NPS</u>
5%	4%	20%

#### Point of Origin (01):

90% Regional: (MD-64%, VA-7%,  
 PA-10%, DC-3%, WV-1%)  
 9% National: (OH-2%, NC-1%, DE-1%,  
 NY-1%, MI-1%, CA, IL)  
 1% International: (CAN, AUS, NZ)

#### Group Affiliation:

Organized Groups:	12%
Families:	52%
Friends:	19%
Alone:	13%
Other:	6%

#### Age Distribution:

Adult:	46%
Senior Citizen:	12%
Youth:	42%

#### Special Populations:

Minority:	10%
Asian:	5%
Af.Am:	4%
Nat.Am:	1%
Physically Disabled:	9%
Non-English Speaking:	1%

#### Occupancy Rates (2006)

	<u>Occ. Rate</u>	<u>Actual Visitors</u>	<u>Days in Season</u>	<u>Max. Vis.</u>	<u>Days in Season</u>
Greentop:	47.0%	11,202	184	129	184
Misty Mount:	50.6%	12,016	184	129	184
Round Meadow:	16.0%	6,906	365	120	365

Visitor use information for Catoctin Mountain Park and the entire National Park System is available through the NPS Public Use Office in Denver, CO.

## VISITOR USE

*We maintain these preserves so that all the people will have access to the source material of our natural and historic origins, besides having the relaxation of and novelty of coming into a world apart from their daily round, and into the presence of beauty, art, the significant moment, and the stirring event.*

**Freeman Tilden, Author**

### ***IMPORTANCE OF SENSORY EXPERIENCES***

Providing quality recreational opportunities and facilities is one of the three major purposes of Catoctin Mountain Park. It is a prime example of the rebirth and diversity of the Eastern deciduous forest and provides outstanding scenic beauty for all to enjoy. Visitors come to Catoctin to seek a variety of experiences. A sense of adventure while hiking a trail, solitude while watching a sunset from a scenic overlook, listening to the chorus of songbirds and the silence of new fallen snow, the smell of the forest after a gentle rain, and the annual display of fall colors are all experiences that visitors value. A 2002 visitor study revealed that 80% or more of our visitors come to view wildlife and scenery with 61% exploring by automobile and another 68% hiking for one hour or more. Visitors also told us the element that detracted from their experience the most was unnatural noise (20%). Visitors rated the importance of several park elements. With 50% rating viewing the night sky as extremely important, 58% rating solitude as extremely important, and 73% rating natural quiet/sounds of nature as extremely important, it is evident that visitors come to Catoctin not only to hike, camp, view wildlife, but to experience the park fully through all their senses. By sharing the wonders of nature, often with family, visitors to Catoctin Mountain Park can make memories that last a lifetime.

### ***RESOURCE EDUCATION PROGRAMS***

Catoctin has been an outdoor classroom for most of its history. Educational opportunities have declined in the park due to changing budgets both in the park and in county school systems. Renewed partnerships with county school systems could also provide opportunities for lifelong learning opportunities that do not currently exist. Attendance at traditional ranger-led interpretive programs in the park has also declined. Decisions to redirect resources into developing new electronic technologies involve, at minimum, staff training and potentially larger risks given the changing nature of technology.



Resource Education Program  
Photo by NPS.

## VISITOR USE

### *VISITOR EXPERIENCE GOALS*

The park's website, programs, and facilities throughout Catoctin Mountain Park provide visitors with information and interpretive, educational, and recreational opportunities. Visitors should have the opportunity to:

- easily find orientation information on the website and within the park.
- receive information on attractions and services in the nearby areas.
- interact with staffs that are professional and courteous, leaving a positive impression of the park and the National Park Service.
- understand that Catoctin Mountain Park is a unit of the National Park System.
- access the park facilities and programs given the full range of visitor abilities and disabilities.
- enjoy a variety of recreational activities that do not interfere with other people and do not adversely impact the park's resources.
- safely enjoy their visit by learning about and following safety guidelines and park rules and regulations.
- find opportunities for solitude and personal discovery.
- gain an appreciation and understanding of Catoctin Mountain Park by learning about the park's natural and cultural heritage.
- discover their own personal connections to the meanings and significance inherent in the natural and cultural resources of Catoctin Mountain Park.
- receive unbiased and accurate information that include multiple points of view.
- purchase publications and educational materials through Eastern National cooperative association that will enhance their experience.
- demonstrate stewardship by using park resources in a manner that promotes and enhances the natural and cultural resources.
- contribute to the stewardship of Catoctin Mountain Park.



Catoctin Mountain Park Visitor Center. Photo by NPS.

## **VISITOR USE**

### ***VISITOR EXPERIENCE GOALS***

#### **Group Camp Visitors**

Organized groups that use Camp Misty Mount, Camp Greentop, or Camp Round Meadow have the opportunity to:

- understand the shared values of the National Park Service and their organizations.
- easily find orientation information and group use information and opportunities on the website and within the park.
- interact with staffs that are professional and courteous, leaving a positive impression of the park and the National Park Service.
- enjoy a variety of recreational activities that do not interfere with other people and do not adversely impact the park's resources.
- safely enjoy their visit by learning about and following safety guidelines and park rules and regulations.
- demonstrate stewardship by using park resources in a manner that promotes and enhances the natural and cultural resources.
- contribute to the stewardship of Catoctin Mountain Park.

#### **Education Program**

Educational groups should have the opportunity to:

- participate in curriculum based education programs that include pre-visit and post-visit activities.
- use the Park as an outdoor classroom and conduct their unique educational activities.
- participate in teacher directed programs using materials and resources provided by the National Park Service.
- use Catoctin Mountain Park to conduct research and to provide internship opportunities.
- safely enjoy their visit by learning about and following safety guidelines and park rules and regulations.
- demonstrate stewardship by using park resources in a manner that promotes and enhances the natural and cultural resources.
- contribute to the stewardship of Catoctin Mountain Park.

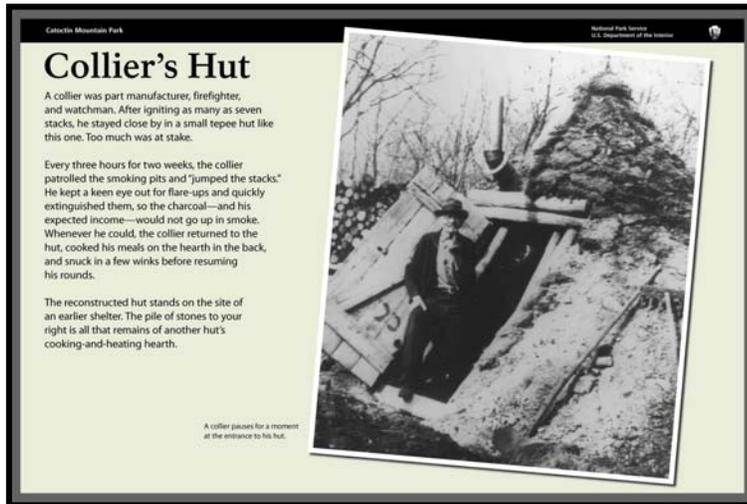
## VISITOR USE

### *VISITOR EXPERIENCE GOALS*

#### **Virtual Visitor**

Visitors who access information about Catoctin Mountain Park through the Internet should have the opportunity to:

- easily navigate the website to plan a visit and/or to learn about the park's natural and cultural resources.
- gain an appreciation and understanding of Catoctin Mountain Park by learning about the park's natural and cultural heritage.
- print the park map, download forms, and print photos from the photo gallery.
- contact the Park through an email link.
- access the National Park Service Planning, Environment and Public Comment website to provide input into Catoctin Mountain Park planning projects.
- access Freedom of Information Act procedures and forms.
- link to local parks, partners, and other appropriate web sites.



Interpretive wayside exhibit panel on the Charcoal Trail

## VISITOR USE

### *PRIMARY INTERPRETIVE THEMES*

#### **1. People: Life on the Mountain**

**Basic skills once used for survival introduce today's visitors to traditional mountain occupations.**

Sub-Themes:

- Remnants of human activity may be as subtle as a flake from an arrowhead or as obvious as miles of stone wall.
- Group camps built as part of the Recreational Demonstration Area have been in continuous use since 1936.
- The land that became Catoctin Mountain Park was transformed into recreational areas for all to enjoy.



Blue Blazes Whiskey Still. Photo by Chris Cusumano.

#### **2. Fun: Making Memories**

**People from all generations and all walks of life discover opportunities for making memories in Catoctin Mountain Park.**

Sub-Themes:

- Visitors can experience the thrill of discovery and the sense of adventure through a variety of resource compatible recreational opportunities.
- Visitors seeking personal reflection, serenity, solitude, fitness, and renewal will find many opportunities at Catoctin Mountain Park.
- Recreational activities may change with the seasons from spring wildflowers through the wonders of winter snow.
- Recreation provides visitors with opportunities for social and family interactions.
- Recreation may be undertaken individually or with others, it may be planned or spontaneous, and it may be passive or active.
- All people can be stewards of the land.

## VISITOR USE

### *PRIMARY INTERPRETIVE THEMES*

#### 3. Renewal: Second Chances

Catoctin Mountain Park dynamically demonstrates the regeneration of disturbed lands.

Sub- Themes:

- The Works Progress Administration, Civilian Conservation Corps, Job Corps, and Youth Conservation Corps enrollees learned basic job skills while participating in projects contributing to the renewal of the forest environment.
- Catoctin Mountain Park is an evolving example of resource stewardship where interactions between natural resources and local cultures have shifted from subsistence to sustainability.
- Continued regeneration of disturbed lands is supported by resource protection, monitoring, and research.
- Catoctin Mountain Park is an outdoor classroom revealing relationships between nature and people.
- Increasing numbers of alien plant species, wildlife population imbalances, and human infringement issues continually demonstrate nature's reaction to external forces.



Workers dine in tents while constructing their own dining hall in 1936.  
Photo by NPS.

Although not directly related to the park's interpretive themes, there are additional areas of focus in the Interpretation Division's operations that are essential to the overall park operations. These include:

- Orientation Information
- Safety
- National Park System and NPS Mission



NPS Maintenance employees raise a new totem pole in Camp Greentop, March 2006. Photo by NPS.

## **VISITOR USE**

### ***VISITOR PROTECTION AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE***

#### **Law Enforcement Activities**

The National Park Service has exclusive federal jurisdiction over all but 38.3 (proprietary) of the 5,810 acres of the park. US Park Rangers maintain a Level 1 Federal Law Enforcement Commission that allows them to protect visitors through the use of education, verbal and written warnings, investigations, citations, and/or arrest under Titles 16 and 18 of the United States Code. There are stringent requirements for annual mandatory law enforcement training. Ranger responsibilities include protection of resources such as wildlife and flora. This is accomplished through education, citations and/or arrest as well as proactive patrols. Law enforcement issues in the park relate to traffic control and motor vehicle accidents, recreational drug use, entering closed areas, security details, destruction of resources by poaching, and visitor assaults. All felony investigations are coordinated with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. All court cases are heard before a United States Magistrate in Frederick, MD.

#### **Physical Security**

We currently utilize and monitor alarm systems in major park structures and will alarm additional structures as funding allows. We also use limited amounts of CCTV systems to monitor specific infrastructure within the park.

#### **Search and Rescue**

Activity in this area falls into two categories: missing hikers and hikers who have fallen and been injured. Catoctin has had several missing hikers who generally are able to find their way to a trailhead without assistance. Occasionally, a hiker will be on the trail after dark or a hiker will go off trail and lose their bearing in the heavily forested area. Recovery of injured hikers originates in the Chimney Rock area when hikers fall while rock hopping. Rock climbers in the Wolf Rock area will sometimes be injured and require technical extrication. Catoctin maintains trained personnel and a cache of rescue equipment. Services from nearby towns of Thurmont, Emmitsburg, and Smithsburg also have technical expertise and the park is able to benefit from this assistance.

#### **Emergency Medical Services**

Emergency medical calls derive largely from motor vehicle accidents, falls and medical situations. The park sustains both emergency medical technicians (EMT) and first responders. Employees trained to this level provide care before ambulances from neighboring towns arrive. Catoctin also receives a number of incidents from the adjacent state park; Cunningham Falls State Park. The Visitor Center for Catoctin is visible immediately adjacent to Route 77 and serves as a contact point for many incidents. First aid kits are located in all ranger vehicles and key buildings throughout the park. Oxygen tanks and Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) are also available.



Motor vehicle accident. Photo by NPS.

## VISITOR USE

### *VISITOR PROTECTION AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE*

#### **Structural Fire Management**

Structural fire needs for 168 structures are currently handled by volunteer fire departments responding from all 4 directions of the compass within a 15 minute response time. These departments have superior equipment, training and staffing to handle our needs. Catoctin does not have adequate staff to perform initial interior attack or suppression.

Smoke alarms are installed in all residential and work locations. Given the importance of the materials located at Headquarters, Visitor Center, and the Resource Management office, these facilities should have a sprinkler system to assure adequate protection of materials and continuity of park operations. The Resource Management Office, Visitor Center, and Headquarters buildings all have historic components. These buildings have ready access to a hose box but the park would rely on a structural fire response from local fire companies.

#### **Wildland Fire Suppression**

Wildland fire suppression is a high risk activity which requires a commitment from management to maintain a high level of safety and knowledge. Rigorous training and qualification standards are maintained and firefighters also respond to out of park fires to maintain proficiency levels. Catoctin currently has eight National Interagency Qualified (NIFQS) firefighters to provide initial attack and suppression of fires. Any fire extending beyond initial attack (any fire that cannot be extinguished within a few hours) will receive mutual aid from firefighters in surrounding NPS parks and regions and local fire companies. Having trained firefighters at Catoctin allows us to provide assistance to nearby parks and communities and throughout the Service. We regularly conduct joint fire training with local volunteer fire departments.



Wolf Rock Fire November 14, 2001. Photo by NPS

## VISITOR USE

### *VISITOR PROTECTION AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE*

#### **Critical Needs for Visitor Protection and Emergency Response:**

There have been a number of changes since 9/11 that impact the division and the park as a whole. Rangers are providing not only a higher level of security but also more frequent security details. Catoctin has also supported the NPS Natural Resource Challenge Resource and created a Resource Management Division by reassigning two rangers. Rangers regularly handle non protection related tasks such as taking water samples and transporting them for water quality tests, conducting check ins/outs for visitors in residential camps, cleaning toilets, doing minor maintenance at camps, performing trail maintenance, painting and carpentry work. Two rangers in the Resource Education Branch of the VPRE Division continue to carry law enforcement commissions and significant interpretive responsibilities. Replacing positions that have been lost to budget constraints and civilianizing residential camp management will allow core protection functions to be increased. Additional visitor protection rangers would allow Catoctin to better mark and monitor boundary, conduct proactive poaching patrols, provide protection and education to visitors through personal contact on the trails and roads.



Writing a citation. Photo by NPS



Firearms qualifications. Photo by NPS

## VISITOR USE

*A people who climb the ridges and sleep under the stars in high mountain meadows, who enter the forest and scale peaks, who explore glaciers and walk ridges buried deep in snow -- these people will give their country some of the indomitable spirit of the mountains.*

**William O. Douglass, Supreme Court Justice**

## **SUSTAINABLE RECREATION**

One purpose of Catoctin Mountain Park is to protect its natural and cultural environment by providing sustainable recreational facilities and activities. Sustainable recreation is environmentally and socially responsible recreation that minimizes impacts on park resources; and provides for the safety and enjoyment of visitors by displaying appropriate user ethics and behaviors without sacrificing opportunities of future generations.

Some 'traditional' recreational activities are in decline as the user population changes. Camping activities across the nation are in decline. Owens Creek Campground was full every weekend for many years but has filled very few weekends during the last several years. As the surrounding area becomes more developed, fewer people keep horses and the corresponding use of the horse trails has also declined. Attendance at ranger programs is down but requests from groups staying overnight in camps to provide service projects has increased. Cycling sports are very popular and their use in the region around the park has grown dramatically over the past two decades. Frederick County offers a variety of cycling opportunities however within Catoctin Mountain Park, cycling is presently restricted to park roads where riders share the roadway with vehicle traffic.

New generations of park users are seeking different recreational opportunities that often involve use of newer technology. Geo-caching can include activities such as placing an item in a location for someone else to find or simply publishing coordinates of locations for others to find and describe the item at that location. Several parks are considering the impacts and use of Segways into the parks and onto the trails.

The desire for high adventure or high-risk activities has increased and baby boomers are redefining what were once termed 'senior' activities. Off road vehicles (ORVs), mountain bikes, skateboarding, rollerblading, have all gained popularity and new adventures attracting the extreme sport enthusiasts will likely continue to grow. Decisions based on science and protection of the resources will be challenging the pressure for new uses and new forms of recreation.

Well thought out decisions based on recreational trends and the environmental and social sciences are necessary to keep visitors interested in coming to Catoctin Mountain Park, to provide services of high value for our visitors, and to preserve the resources that make the park a prime recreational opportunity relevant for future generations.

### **Critical Needs for Sustainable Recreation:**

Catoctin Mountain Park needs to analyze current recreational trends and park use in-depth to determine how best to protect resources, allocate resources and meet the needs of future recreation. Additional research is needed in the following areas:

- Percentage and nationalities of foreign visitors and identify associated recreational trends and use.
- Emerging new sports that may soon occur on parkland and their associated resource impacts.
- Need to redirect the focus of current outdoor recreational opportunities and if so, how best to accomplish that transition.